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Culture of peace

Promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 72/136, 72/137 and 72/17, by which the Secretary-General was requested to report on activities undertaken by relevant United Nations entities to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue. As the lead agency for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013–2022), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has prepared the report, in cooperation with relevant United Nations entities, highlighting new trends and putting forward recommendations for action.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolutions 72/136, on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, and 72/137, on the follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its seventy-third session, information on progress made by Member States and United Nations entities towards the implementation of the resolutions to promote a culture of peace. In contrast to previous reports under the item entitled "Culture of peace", the scope of the present report was expanded to also include resolution 72/17 on the effects of terrorist acts directed against religious sites on a culture of peace. This allows for the consideration of several key and often interrelated challenges that have emerged in recent years with respect to a culture of peace.

2. Actions to promote a culture of peace are being taken against a global backdrop of cultures living in closer proximity and conflict dynamics changing and becoming more complex. The speed and escalation of migration, population growth and new technologies are shaping a global landscape that is increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Coupled with the increased priority given to conflict prevention that has characterized recent peace efforts, recognition has been growing at the global level of the importance of both intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Dialogue has been underscored as both a standard and a tool for ensuring a culture of peace.

3. For almost two decades, the United Nations has been working towards a culture of peace based on respect for human rights, democracy and tolerance, the promotion of development, education for peace, the free flow of information and the wider participation of women. This common aspiration of humankind, inspired by mutual respect and a sincere attachment to non-violence, has steadily gained stronger international support alongside changes in the international landscape. The designation by the United Nations of the International Year for the Culture of Peace (2000), the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001–2010), the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010) and the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013–2022) is evidence of not only the pronounced need for peace but also the collective commitment and action required.

4. Concurrently, escalating threats to cultural diversity have emerged as a key component of societies and their development. Growing tensions among communities of different cultural backgrounds, religions and beliefs have often been accompanied by incitement to violence by people who, at times, have used culture as their justification. This has been brought to the forefront with the alarming rise in attacks on religious and cultural heritage sites as a form of cultural cleansing, which, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2347 (2017), can be considered a war crime. It further reflects the increasing interaction between culture, security and humanitarian activity. Resolutions 72/136 and 72/137, focused on intercultural dialogue and the proliferation of cultural diversity, are directly complemented by resolution 72/17, in which attacks on cultural diversity are considered. The present report is therefore submitted pursuant to those three resolutions.

5. The reporting period, from May 2017 to April 2018, was marked by several developments at the international level that had a bearing on the work of United Nations agencies, national ownership and the consolidated implementation of a culture of peace. Notably, the recent introduction of the new peace architecture provided new impetus for examining how peace is approached and coordinated within the United Nations. This was brought to the forefront in the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43), which built

upon the recent resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016). Key United Nations entities concerned with the peace a..d security pillar have subsequently pursued greater cross-pillar engagement in favour of preventing conflict and building and sustaining peace.

6. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development continues to guide the international community in implementing a bold and integrated development framework. It underscores the mutually reinforcing relationship between peace and inclusive development. While peace is reflected across many Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 16, on promoting and building peaceful, just and inclusive societies, is in direct alignment with a culture of peace in meeting the social, economic and environmental needs of present and future generations. Similarly, Goal 16 recognizes the need to face issues that hamper the development of peaceful societies.

7. Echoing the strategic shift of recent years towards preventive peacebuilding, efforts to address violent extremism have focused on earlier intervention in the cycle of radicalization to violence. In the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, a clear association was made between the prevention of violent extremism and development, and Member States were encouraged to align development policies with the Sustainable Development Goals, many of which were highlighted as critical to addressing the push and pull factors of violent extremism and to enhancing community resilience. Dialogue has increasingly emerged as an instrument for addressing violent extremism, as illustrated in the framework to counter terrorist narratives proposed by the Counter-Terrorism Committee (see S/2017/375).

8. The International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013–2022), adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and endorsed by the General Assembly, has provided an overarching framework for activities carried out across the United Nations system in this area, and the core priorities of the action plan for the Decade provide the thematic structure of the present report. The contributions from a range of United Nations entities reflect a more diversified, multi-tiered approach to peacebuilding at the international, national and local levels and bring to light the work of some United Nations entities engaged in global peacebuilding whose work has previously been documented in less detail.

II. Promoting mutual understanding and reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity

9. Diversity is a reality of the globalized world, and respect for cultural pluralism is at the heart of a culture of peace. Nevertheless, around the world, discrimination, inequalities and human rights violations continue to be fuelled by identity politics, exacerbating exclusion and social injustices and weakening the social fabric.

10. Human mobility has become a central issue of global development efforts, as evidenced by the commitment of Member States to developing a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and a global compact on refugees in 2018 (see General Assembly resolution 71/1). In 2015, the number of international migrants was estimated at about 244 million, 3.3 per cent of the global population. Migration has an impact on multiple economic, social and security aspects that affect the daily lives of a host of countries across the globe. In 2016, there were 40.3 million internally displaced persons and 22.5 million refugees worldwide, a scale unseen since the Second World War. Migration and refugee issues have increasingly been a focus of

the work of UNESCO in recent years, owing to their direct connection with rising discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. To improve public perceptions of migrants and refugees, UNESCO organized a global contest entitled "Opening hearts and minds for refugees", with the support of the Federal Research and Methodological Centre for Tolerance, Psychology and Education in the Russian Federation, in partnership with the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network, a global network of 11,000 educational institutions in 181 countries. The prize-winning creations by children were reproduced in *The Power of Solidarity*, published by UNESCO in 2017. Such initiatives foster social inclusion and respect for cultures in the early stages of life as a means of empowering and inspiring young people to be tolerant and engaged citizens. The migration issue is central to the contribution of UNESCO to the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 2018.

11. Cities are often on the front lines of the migration issue, being prime destinations for internal and international migrants. As such, migration is a factor that continues to shape social, political, economic and cultural developments in cities. The UNESCO initiative on the theme "Welcoming cities for refugees: promoting inclusion and protecting rights", implemented together with the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation and the European branch of the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities, found that most of its 500 member cities have from 16 to 40 per cent foreign-born populations. Building upon the findings and recommendations of the *Cities Welcoming Refugees and Migrants* publication of 2016, UNESCO carried out targeted advocacy activities, including providing policy advice to the fourth global mayoral forum on human mobility, migration and development, held in Berlin in June 2017.

Attacks on cultural heritage

Attacks against monuments, sites and practices of cultural or religious significance have continued during the reporting period. In November 2017, in the first report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2347 (2017) (S/2017/969), information was included on new measures implemented at the national and international levels, including strengthening the collaboration between the judiciary and police forces and training specialized personnel to protect cultural goods during armed conflict, curbing the illicit trafficking in cultural property and fighting violent extremism. As part of the efforts to support Member States in the implementation of Security Council resolution 2199 (2015), which includes legally binding measures to disrupt terrorist financing through the illicit trafficking of antiquities from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, UNESCO has intensified cooperation with other United Nations agencies, international partners and the art market sector.

UNESCO has continued to support Member States in their responses to complex emergency situations. The UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund has proved to be an effective tool for the rapid deployment of urgent safeguarding interventions and the assessment of damage, as well as the delivery of capacity-building in response to damage caused by armed conflict worldwide, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

In November 2017, at the international high-level panel discussion on the theme "Responding to cultural cleansing, preventing violent extremism", panellists examined the challenges of heritage protection in times of conflict, the links between the protection and transmission of heritage and the fight against sectarian violence, as well as the importance of culture for healing communities recovering from conflict. In the margins of the event, a letter of intent formalizing and further enhancing collaboration between UNESCO and the International Criminal Court was signed.

Following the Court's ruling in August 2017, in which it delivered its first reparation order for the war crime of destruction of cultural property for the destruction of shrines and mausoleums in Timbuktu, Mali, in 2012, UNESCO initiated collaboration with the Court's trust fund for victims in order to contribute to bringing justice to the victims of these crimes.

In June 2018, UNESCO brought together high-level government representatives and experts for a major conference on the circulation of cultural property and shared heritage, including cooperation in the prevention of the illicit trafficking of cultural property.

During the International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, held in Kuwait City in February 2018, UNESCO launched, in close cooperation with the Government and the people of Iraq, in particular young women and men, a flagship initiative entitled "Revive the spirit of Mosul", a city that symbolizes the rich cultural diversity of the country. Building upon the recognition of culture and education as fundamental resources for promoting peacebuilding and community reconciliation for the sustainable reconstruction of the city, UNESCO will coordinate international efforts to revive the city's cultural and educational institutions, libraries and museums and to restore the urban heritage and architectural symbols that bring the Iraqi people together.

12. The global #Unite4Heritage campaign continued to garner support on social media for standing against intolerance and sectarianism by promoting and celebrating cultural diversity. In October 2017, the campaign launched a multilingual "social media newsroom" to engage online audiences about heritage topics, ranging from illicit trafficking to intangible cultural heritage. As part of this initiative, 16 short stories were produced and shared on UNESCO social media accounts in five languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish). Since January 2017, the online presence of the campaign has been boosted on Twitter, with 3.46 million impressions on the #Unite4Heritage account and 6.45 million impressions on the UNESCO account.

13. As stated by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights in her report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/34/56), the arts are "among the best ways to fight fundamentalism and extremism. They are not luxuries, but critical to creating alternatives, making space for peaceful contestation and protecting youth from radicalization". Respect for human rights, in particular artistic freedom, encompassing freedom of expression, the right to create without intimidation, the right to freedom of movement and association and the right to participate in cultural life, is a core tenet of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of 2005. Among the objectives of the Convention is to encourage dialogue among cultures with a view to ensuring wider and balanced cultural exchanges in the world in favour of intercultural respect and a culture of peace. The *Reshaping Cultural Policies: Advancing Creativity for Development* global report of UNESCO of 2018, in which global implementation of the Convention was analysed, highlighted the fact that 430 attacks on artistic freedom by both governmental and non-governmental actors had been reported in 2016, more than four times the number of cases reported in 2014 (90). Artists continue to be targets of online harassment and physical violence when their work is perceived to challenge or criticize ideologies, beliefs and social preferences. Limiting artistic expression, therefore, directly undermines human rights and impedes the contribution of artists to promoting and sustaining peace. During the reporting period, UNESCO accelerated efforts to promote artistic freedom in line with its standard-setting

instruments, including by bringing together a range of stakeholders to strengthen partnerships for artistic freedom, developing and testing new awareness-raising and capacity-building tools and promoting artistic freedom in the digital age. Similarly, new guidelines adopted for the implementation of the 2005 Convention support stakeholders in applying a human rights-based approach to navigating the opportunities and challenges brought about by digital technologies.

14. Respect for cultural diversity is an integral part of the broader work of UNESCO to eliminate racism and racial discrimination. The Organization partnered with the Musée de l'Homme in Paris to organize the travelling exhibition entitled "Us and them — from prejudice to racism" from March 2017 to January 2018, as part of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March). The Youth Solidarity Fund of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations supported organizations led by young people in seven developing countries through grants of $25,000 and technical support for projects to promote cultural and religious diversity. These activities directly benefitted 11,166 people, of which 9,242 were young people, including 5,289 young women. Since 2014, UNESCO has been involved in a multidimensional intervention in Burkina Faso for the social inclusion of marginalized groups, including women accused of witchcraft. On the basis of dialogue sessions among stakeholders, actions are taken to promote inclusion and victim rehabilitation and to provide direct support for the economic empowerment of women.

15. UNESCO continued to strengthen its intercultural dialogue interventions to encourage a deeper knowledge of the diversity of Africa, combat stereotypes and prejudices and enhance the recognition of shared history, memory and heritage. To date, it has published eight volumes of the *General History of Africa* in 13 languages. As part of its continued work to broaden the reach of this series of books to younger generations, a nine-part television series based on the *General History of Africa* was shown on BBC World News throughout 2017, and three volumes were adapted for pedagogical use, with a focus on dealing with current challenges faced by Africans and their diasporas. These initiatives aim to advance knowledge of conflict, interethnic and interreligious tensions, poverty and underdevelopment in Africa and to rebut attempts to revise history for partisan purposes. Heritage, as an expression of cultural diversity, can play a crucial role in raising public awareness and educating young people in the commemoration of slavery and the slave trade, as well as in nurturing reconciliation and social cohesion. In 2018, as a contribution to the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024), UNESCO published *Legacies of Slavery: a Resource Book for Managers of Sites and Itineraries of Memory*, in which guidelines are provided on how best to preserve, promote and manage sites of memory, considering their sensitive and often painful connotations.

16. While intercultural dialogue is increasingly recognized for its instrumental role in building the conditions for peace and sustainable development, the dearth of available data undermines evidence-based policymaking and informed programming. The *UNESCO Survey on Intercultural Dialogue 2017* set out the findings of the first-ever survey among UNESCO member States to take stock of the current conceptual understanding of intercultural dialogue, as well as policies, legislation, available data, resources and main stakeholders in this field. The results provide an insight into country-specific policies on intercultural dialogue, offering a point of analysis for monitoring and policymaking, and underpin the impact and reach of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013–2022). The survey served as the basis for the UNESCO global data project on intercultural dialogue, the aim of which is to understand both the impact of intercultural dialogue on key development and security priorities (including peacebuilding, conflict prevention and the promotion and protection of human rights) and the conditions needed to enable it to be effective

in achieving them. The project will also inform the Organization's future strategy on intercultural dialogue. The scoping study for the project, launched with the Institute for Economics and Peace in May 2018, will help to direct the conceptual and technical development of this ambitious, long-term project. Similarly, understanding the trends, gaps and opportunities in the use of digital resources in intercultural dialogue was the focus of a regional mapping process led by UNESCO, the results of which featured in *Diversity, Dialogue and Sharing*, published in 2017. In parallel, UNESCO unveiled its e-platform on intercultural dialogue to serve as an international hub for decision makers, institutions, non-governmental organizations, academia and the public and private sectors to promote good practices and to facilitate networking among different stakeholders working in the field of intercultural dialogue. Funded by the Government of Azerbaijan, the e-platform supports efforts in the prevention of violent extremism, the integration of migrants, the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of young people by enhancing understanding among different religions, cultures, countries and peoples.

17. Across the United Nations system, there was a continued commitment to take forward the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, focused on: (a) education, skills development and employment facilitation; (b) the empowerment of young people; (c) strategic communications, the Internet and social media; and (d) gender equality and the empowerment of women. UNESCO has placed emphasis on supporting the educational efforts of countries to build the resilience of young people to violent extremist messaging and foster a positive sense of identity and belonging through the acquisition of values, skills and behaviours that strengthen their commitment to non-violence and peace. On the basis of its guidance tools on preventing violent extremism through education, UNESCO has organized training for policymakers and teachers in East and West Africa, Central Asia, South-Eastern Europe and South Asia. In April 2018, the Organization held an inter-institutional consultation on education for preventing violent extremism at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, with the participation of more than 20 international actors working on the issue, including United Nations agencies, to strengthen coordination and global networking in the area of preventing violent extremism through education.

18. Young people are among the first to be affected by violent extremism and are often both victims and perpetrators of violent extremist acts. The Networks of Mediterranean Youth project, led by UNESCO and the European Union, contributes to preventing violent extremism by addressing issues that lead to disillusionment among young people and by ensuring that young people are part of decision-making and are heard in the media. UNESCO partnered with the European External Action Service during the high-level European Union conference on the theme "Promoting youth in peacebuilding", held in Brussels in May 2018, to organize two panel discussions on the engagement of young people in preventing violent extremism and peacebuilding. UNESCO also collaborated with the Human Security Collective, the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and the Permanent Missions of Canada and the Netherlands to the United Nations for the side event on a human security and youth leadership approach to preventing violent extremism at the United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States, held in New York in June 2018. The "Prevention of violent extremism through youth empowerment in Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia" project was launched by UNESCO and the Office of Counter-Terrorism in April 2018. "Preventing violent extremism and strengthening social inclusion" was the theme of the second International Youth Conference on Volunteering and Dialogue, held at UNESCO headquarters in September 2017. The Conference was undertaken in collaboration with the United Nations Volunteers, the World Organization of the Scout Movement and the World Scout Foundation and funded by the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Programme for a Culture of Peace and Dialogue, which was initiated by

he Government of Saudi Arabia. More than 100 young volunteers came together to discuss refugees and migration, intercultural education, the role of the media and social media in constructing positive dialogue and the engagement of young people with cultural heritage and the arts. The same conference saw the inauguration of the photo exhibition entitled "The power of empathy", featuring a selection of photographs and stories from more than 800 entries to a global youth contest. In 2017, UNESCO also published *Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media: Mapping the Research*, providing a global mapping of research about the assumed roles played by social media in violent radicalization processes, especially when they affect young people and women across the world.

19. Viewing young people as vital contributors to solutions is necessary to harness their potential to become a transformative force in peacebuilding. Such an approach resonates in the work of the Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative, founded by the UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, Forest Whitaker, to empower young people to become peace leaders and agents of positive transformations. In May 2017, the Initiative's flagship programme, the Youth Peacemaker Network, was launched in the Acholi subregion, in the north of Uganda. With a view to supporting peacebuilding in South Sudan, a sports centre was established, in partnership with UNESCO and the One World Play Project, at the protection of civilians camp in Juba to leverage sport for a culture of peace and non-violence. UNESCO supported action led by media students of the Media and Journalism School, National University of Samoa, to raise public awareness of school-related gender-based violence. The students took part in a training workshop on school-related gender-based violence to deepen their understanding of the issue and to discuss possible future youth-led interventions. Subsequently, the trainees developed a series of media materials on gender-based violence in schools.

20. Terrorism and violent extremism affect women and girls in diverse ways, and they are often the first victims of violent extremist groups. Although women play key roles in preventing and countering violent extremism, their capacities to mentor, negotiate and mediate have largely remained untapped. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) is working with religious actors to build country and regional networks to promote cross-learning approaches to the early signs of radicalization, the disengagement and reintegration of former terrorists, the development of research and round-table discussions on female combatants and on the interpretation of religious texts. In Kenya, for example, implementing partners in the north-eastern and coastal counties have engaged with the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims and their religious leaders, young people and elders who are involved in the 10-member coordination committee for efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism in Wajir to raise awareness among community members.

Building an evidence base on the root causes of violent extremism

While much has been gained in learning about violent extremism, knowledge on the push and pull factors needs to be strengthened to build a solid evidence base for programming. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has applied this principle to its work on violent extremism by supporting action-oriented global and regional research projects that uncover the root causes of violent conflict. In September 2017, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa released a study entitled *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment*, in which the sociological and ideological drivers for recruitment of violent extremists in the continent were identified through interviews with 495 former members of extremist groups. In March 2018, UNDP launched a research initiative on the gendered dimensions of disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration, including the role of women in extremist settings as perpetrators, returnees and

peacebuilders. The initiative is based on interviews with more than 40 peacebuilders, researchers and policymakers, including members of civil society from more than 15 countries. In June 2017, UNDP began to develop a global report on the role of young people in preventing extremism, which collects the perspectives of young people, youth organizations and relevant practitioners in a broad range of countries and regions. In the report for 2018, the myriad ways in which young people are at the forefront of efforts to prevent violent extremism are highlighted, and lessons and recommendations on taking an approach to empower young people are offered for actors engaged in preventing violent extremism. A core finding is that effective approaches to prevention require active support for and investment in young people's development priorities, initiatives and participation in decision-making. These initiatives provide necessary insights into the complexities of modern violent conflict and inform a new generation of UNDP programming to promote a culture of peace.

III. Supporting reconciliation and peace efforts through dialogue

21. The shift towards conflict prevention in peacebuilding efforts is a key marker of the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43). Firmly based on the shared responsibility of all stakeholders and aimed at ensuring greater coherence across the three pillars of the United Nations, namely, peace and security, human rights and development, it has provided a critically important framework for broader cooperation by which to move forward with peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

22. Following the report, United Nations entities continued to roll out activities in support of conflict prevention and the identification of its root causes. The high-level meeting on "Peacebuilding and sustaining peace" held in April 2018 sought to move the United Nations beyond conceptual debates towards tangible action. The meeting concluded with the adoption of parallel twin resolutions, General Assembly resolution 72/276 and Security Council resolution 2413 (2018), on the follow-up to the report, demonstrating a clear reaffirmation by Member States of their commitment to peacebuilding, and relevant United Nations bodies were assigned to take forward the recommendations of the report.

23. Notably, this involved the revitalization of the Peacebuilding Support Office, which, together with the Department of Political Affairs, will form the new Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs as of 1 January 2019, to serve as a "hinge" between the three pillars of the United Nations. To support this bridging role, the Peacebuilding Commission diversified its working methods, holding several country and region-specific meetings among intergovernmental organs and in support of dialogue and reconciliation. New initiatives were taken to enhance dialogue and reconciliation for Burkina Faso, Colombia, the Gambia, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka. For example, at the request of the Government of Colombia, in November 2017, the Peacebuilding Support Office brought together key national and international stakeholders to discuss the peace process. Similarly, in 2017, the Commission convened several discussions on the Gambia, with a view to assisting the country at a time of critical transition, concerning the draft bill on the truth, reconciliation and reparations commission. Support for reconciliation through dialogue was a focus of several initiatives financed by the Peacebuilding Fund, such as one to assist the Government of Liberia by providing $10 million for continued human rights monitoring and multi-stakeholder dialogues to reduce concession-related conflicts in the build-up to elections by implementing its peacebuilding plan.

24. At the local level, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan facilitated peace initiatives, including 14 Afghan-led mediation and reconciliation initiatives implemented throughout 2017 at the provincial and district levels with stakeholders from 16 provinces. The Mission also provided technical and financial support to the "Mothers of peace" dialogue project in Afghanistan, which brought together 36 women from three provinces to address barriers to the participation of women in peace efforts. Throughout the year, female representatives established provincial-level committees to undertake activities related to peace and conflict resolution. The United Nations Global Compact continued to emphasize work at the local level by engaging the private sector in high-risk and conflict-affected areas of the world through developing tools and resources, convening dialogues and establishing partnerships.

25. Leveraging young people in peacebuilding emerged as a central focus of the efforts of the United Nations throughout the reporting period. *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* was presented to the Security Council in April 2018, in accordance with its resolution 2250 (2015) on youth and peace and security, in which the Secretary-General was requested to carry out a progress study on the positive contribution of young people to peace processes and conflict resolution. In its resolution 2419 (2018), the Security Council subsequently called for the role of youth to be increased in negotiating and implementing peace agreements and recommended that the Peacebuilding Commission include in its advice ways to engage young people in national efforts to build and sustain peace. The Division for Inclusive Social Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has been working with United Nations country offices, relevant United Nations agencies and youth ministries of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo. This work is intended to strengthen participatory processes between the Governments and youth civil society through capacity-building workshops, open dialogues and national campaigns on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in schools, neighbourhoods, communities and villages. The aim of the project is to promote the revision and reformulation of national youth policies to better address current challenges and boost the role of young people as agents in building sustainable and peaceful societies.

26. While peace has long been an overarching ideal in the United Nations system, over time it has adapted to a continuously changing set of realities. In May 2018, UNESCO published *Long Walk of Peace: Towards a Culture of Prevention*, the product of a three-year UNESCO-led research project in collaboration with the Abat Oliba CEU University in Barcelona and 32 United Nations agencies. The publication tracks the progression of the peace agenda of the United Nations over the past seven decades, highlighting a range of challenges and transformative trends, and puts forward recommendations for sustaining peace. As underlined in the joint study of the United Nations and the World Bank *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, prevention works, saves lives and is cost effective. The study also stresses the importance of inclusive approaches to preventing violent conflict and explores how development processes can better interact with diplomacy and mediation, security and other tools to prevent conflict from becoming violent.

Gender-responsive peacebuilding

The Peacebuilding Fund in Sierra Leone contributed to supporting women and young people in preparation for the country's elections. A total of $10 million was provided to Liberia to implement the country's peacebuilding plan to strengthen human rights monitoring and multi-stakeholder dialogues. The Peacebuilding Fund in Libya also financed the national reconciliation project, under which four local dialogues led to the signing of reconciliation agreements between tribes and communities formerly in conflict. This included a women-only dialogue held in Tripoli in November 2017.

UN-Women is working to expand the number of women mediators and the influence of women in peace processes through broadening regional networks, supported by monitoring and development. In Burundi, UN-Women continued to enhance a nationwide network of women mediators, comprising 516 women across 18 provinces. Since January 2016, the network has dealt with more than 14,000 conflicts related to political, land, domestic violence and youth issues. Support provided to the women's coalition in South Sudan, comprising 44 women's organizations, included a position paper and lobbying for the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to embrace peace and increase the quota of women in parliament from 25 to 35 per cent. In South Sudan, the establishment of centres for the empowerment of women have provided safe spaces for women in conflict situations. To promote the mediation of local disputes and address gender-based violence, Liberian women adopted the concept of "peace huts", which are community-led peacebuilding groups. To date, 29 peace huts have been established. Similarly, the Mediterranean women mediators network, launched in October 2017, helped to identify women mediators and experts for the Commonwealth women mediators network, established in December 2017.

IV. Building a framework for commonly shared values to foster social cohesion

27. Dialogue and collaboration with faith-based actors and community leaders continued to be a common approach and an often critical component in United Nations efforts to strengthen community and institutional capacities for social cohesion. This included activities geared towards reconciling religion and human rights everywhere, addressing conflict resolution, promoting gender equality and strengthening the coexistence of refugees and host communities.

28. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continued to implement the follow-up to the Beirut Declaration on Faith for Rights and its 18 commitments, a framework providing space for cross-disciplinary reflection and action on the mutually enriching connections between religions and human rights. In Rabat in December 2017, more than 100 States, national human rights institutions, regional organizations, religious authorities and faith-based civil society actors participated in an OHCHR symposium to discuss the implementation of the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. In May 2018, OHCHR engaged with and consulted young people in a regional workshop in Tunis on the role of youth faith actors in promoting human rights in the Middle East and North Africa. The "Churches' commitments to children" initiative was agreed upon as a result of the global partnership between the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Council of Churches and a broad consultative process including 235 experts. These commitments outline specific actions and strategies in response to pressing challenges concerning children, with a focus on ending violence against children, welcoming and supporting refugees and migrants, and addressing action to mitigate and prepare for climate change. In the Philippines, UNICEF built upon relationships with Islamic religious leaders to develop nine sermons conducive to child protection, including on "peaceful jihad". Religious leaders of communities in conflict-affected areas have circulated these sermons throughout 2018.

29. At the global level, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) continues to steward United Nations system collaboration around religion, development and peacebuilding through the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-based Organizations for Development, which counts more than 17 United Nations entities as members. In March 2018, UNFPA was a sponsor of the Arab regional strategic learning exchange on religion, development and peacebuilding, involving 10 United Nations bodies and 60 faith-based and cultural partners. In April 2018, it coordinated a strategic planning retreat for the Sustainable Development Goals with 15 United Nations bodies and more than 40 partners from faith-based organizations, resulting in the endorsement of a faith-based advisory board for the Inter-Agency Task Force, to be launched at the General Assembly. UNFPA work in Djibouti, Egypt, Somalia and the Sudan focused on the abandonment of female genital mutilation and delinking it from religion. In Somaliland, for example, 400 male religious leaders and 100 female scholars were trained in the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting, 300 advocacy sessions were given during Friday sermons at mosques, and female genital mutilation and Islam were the focuses of 10 radio programmes and 15 television episodes broadcast nationwide.

30. Nurturing dialogue between refugees and host communities formed part of the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to strengthen inclusion and coexistence. In Cameroon, UNHCR organized 55 projects on peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities, including educational talks on cultural values and peaceful coexistence, a craft fair for refugees and host community members, intercommunity dialogues and training of refugee community leaders and members of host communities. About 78,077 participants benefitted from increased social interaction in communities and the identification of pathways for conflict prevention. In Turkey, UNHCR created a task force to coordinate social cohesion efforts across the country. Engaging local community leaders, such as imams, mukhtars and school managers, has greatly helped in the mediation of tensions between refugees and host communities. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations has been working to foster better relations between refugees and host communities through the provision of training on agricultural skills in Turkey. As part of the training, participants connect with local employers through job fairs, thereby increasing their employment opportunities and integration in the community.

V. Disseminating the principles and tools of intercultural and interreligious dialogue through quality education and the media

31. Cultural diversity and interculturality have become realities of modern life for many people across the world. Equipping people with the relevant skills and tools has become paramount. Reflecting the rise and breadth of digital expansion, several United Nations bodies took up, during the reporting period, new technologies to diversify programming and broaden programme beneficiaries. While new media and digital technologies have opened new opportunities for dialogue, democratic participation, learning, creative expression and the sharing of platforms, they have also provided spaces for insecurity, hate speech, xenophobia and racism.

32. Following the positive reception of the Intercultural Competences: Conceptual and Operational Framework, issued by UNESCO in 2013, the Organization has worked with a leading expert from Duke University in the United States of America to create a globally accessible and adaptable activity based on story-telling. The aim of this collaboration was to develop core intercultural competences, such as empathy,

reflexivity and listening for understanding, among diverse audiences facing a wide range of issues. The UNESCO manual on intercultural competences based on human rights has been piloted in Thailand and Zimbabwe, in collaboration with UNFPA, the International Labour Organization, the city of Harare and numerous local non-governmental organizations. In Costa Rica, the manual was piloted in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Youth, the Office of the Ombudsperson, the National Human Rights Institution, the Office of the President on Indigenous Affairs and various non-governmental organizations. Further pilot sessions are planned in Austria and Tunisia in late 2018. Evaluations of the pilot sessions demonstrated that the majority of the more than 400 participants reported that they had acquired strong skills for empathy, reflexivity and listening for understanding.

33. In the progress report for 2017 of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, jointly coordinated by UNESCO and UNHCR, it was indicated that significant efforts had been made since 2015 in human rights education and training, whether or not as part of a strategy developed in the specific context of the World Programme. Human rights is also an underlying theme of the UNESCO "Writing peace" manual of 2017, aimed at raising awareness among children of diversity and the concept of peace. The first pilot workshop on the manual was held in Rabat in February 2018. The work of UNESCO in textbook development has continued to broaden to include considerations of the role of education in promoting human rights and ending discrimination. A four-year project (2013–2017) to produce quality textbooks with regard to religion, gender and culture was implemented through capacity-building workshops in Argentina, Germany, Morocco, Poland, Romania, South Africa and South Sudan, and "Making textbook content inclusive: a focus on religion, gender and culture" was published in 2017. The United Nations System Staff College, as a learning and capacity-development partner of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-based Organizations for Development, has remained committed to engaging faith-based organizations in its educational activities and to providing education and knowledge management tools.

34. In Lebanon, the United Nations Volunteers partnered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to ensure that Palestinian children have access to education by employing more than 100 Palestinian refugees as national United Nations Volunteer teachers and tutors. This allowed more than 30,000 long-term Palestinian refugee children in Lebanon and more than 5,000 new Palestinian refugee children from the Syrian Arab Republic to be reached during the school years 2016/17 and 2017/18. Such initiatives have sought to ensure that all learners have equitable access to quality education and skills to build social cohesion.

35. As part of efforts to raise the topic of the prevention of violent extremism through education on the policy agenda and in the education system, UNESCO continued to produce guidance tools, including "A teacher's guide on the prevention of violent extremism", issued in 2016, in conjunction with capacity-building activities for teachers, teacher trainers and policymakers. Exclusionary, xenophobic and racist discourses and acts of violence have become a growing concern for global citizenship education, the aim of which is to equip learners with the skills, values and attitudes to build and sustain peaceful and just societies. A synthesis of discussions from the UNESCO seminar on nationalistic perspectives and their implications for global citizenship education, held in Seoul in June 2017, was produced in a booklet to provide a renewed understanding of the vision, skills and approaches needed to move forward in addressing these challenges. Under the Education for Justice initiative, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNESCO are also promoting a culture of lawfulness through educational activities, including for the purposes of terrorism prevention.

36. New media and digital tools can be allies in promoting the democratic participation of civil society. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations expanded the reach of its PEACEapp competition, launched in 2014, to raise awareness among refugees and host communities in Morocco and Spain of the potential of information and communications technology for intercultural and interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding. Following workshops held in Spain in 2017, the gamified app "SURVIVAL" was developed in collaboration with PEACEapp. It has since been downloaded more than 7,000 times. In May 2017, UNDP collaborated with Facebook to launch the #ExtremeLives campaign, a series of Facebook Live interviews that uncover the human face of extremism in Asia and show positive alternatives. The interviews profile individuals affected by extremism, including former fighters, victims, wives and mothers of jihadists and peacebuilders. To date, the series has reached 12 million Facebook users. OHCHR also harnessed new media to deliver two interactive e-learning modules on operationalizing the right to development in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in collaboration with the University for Peace, Costa Rica, mandated by the United Nations, and the United Nations University International Institute for Global Health, Malaysia.

37. As part of a series of international conferences addressing Internet radicalization and violence in cyberspace, UNESCO organized a meeting on "Darknet: the new societal, legal, technological and ethical challenges" in September 2017, which explored the technical and legal implications of cyberthreats and ways to improve national strategies. The Global Cybersecurity Index of the International Telecommunication Union measures the efforts of countries in addressing cybersecurity. In 2017, 134 countries responded to the survey for the Index, a 28 per cent increase from 2014, demonstrating the strengthened commitment of countries to join together in raising the level of cybersecurity worldwide.

38. Similarly, during the reporting period, it was apparent that civil society is increasingly engaging with social media to have concrete discussions on some of the negative dimensions of the Internet, such as hate speech. Two symposiums on the topic of hate speech against migrants and refugees in the media organized by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in Brussels and Cairo in 2017, for instance, received a large following on Twitter. The Brussels symposium reached more than 13 million Twitter accounts, with nearly 30 million impressions, while the Cairo symposium reached close to 2 million accounts, with 11 million impressions.

39. Navigating the current media landscape requires the ability to critically evaluate, as well as to responsibly use and contribute to, media content. The UNESCO social media strategy "Media and information literacy: critical thinking, creativity, literacy, intercultural, citizenship, knowledge and sustainability" supports close to 5,000 young people in acquiring competencies in media and information literacy and intercultural dialogue. During the reporting period, more than 300 young people were trained in the first international massive open online course on media and information literacy and intercultural skills, and more than 100 resources were added to the multimedia intercultural teaching resources tool through the UNESCO and United Nations Alliance of Civilizations online clearing house for media and information literacy.

40. A free press (print media, broadcast media and the Internet) is a cornerstone of a democratic society. UNESCO supports freedom of expression and independent and professional journalism. In March 2017, UNESCO issued the publication *Terrorism and the Media: a Handbook for Journalists* to encourage reflection on the ethical and journalistic challenges regarding terrorism, as well as issues on the safety of journalists, such as kidnappings and trauma. Over the past decade alone, more than 600 journalists and media professionals have been killed, mostly in non-conflict situations. UNESCO has taken the lead in the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, endorsed in April 2012.

VI. Fostering dialogue for protecting the planet and its ethical, religious, social and cultural dimensions

41. As peace and development are mutually dependent, the promotion of a culture of peace and intercultural and interreligious dialogue is integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In the reporting period, it was demonstrated that United Nations bodies are increasingly using dialogue for environmental development.

42. Building dialogue can be a critical factor in addressing conflict over natural resources. Promoting shared management of the transboundary natural resources in the Lake Chad Basin region is central to the ongoing Biosphere and Heritage of Lake Chad project, jointly implemented by two UNESCO programmes, the International Hydrological Programme and the Programme on Man and the Biosphere. The aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity of member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission to safeguard and sustainably manage hydrological, biological and cultural resources through establishing a transboundary biosphere reserve, thereby reducing poverty and promoting a green economy and peace. A strategic action programme for the Dinaric Karst aquifers in South-Eastern Europe that aims to improve transboundary groundwater governance and the sustainability of related ecosystems was endorsed by the Governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro and is to be implemented by UNESCO from 2019 to 2024. To better engage women in peacebuilding processes relating to the management of natural resources, UN-Women, the United Nations Environment Programme, UNDP and the Peacebuilding Support Office are piloting a joint programme on women, natural resources and peace in Colombia and Northern Kordofan, the Sudan. The pilot project is aimed at testing different strategies to strengthen national capacities and support structures to ensure that women's skills are used and their potential is realized. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations continued to implement the Dimitra clubs, a flagship community-driven approach to enhance rural people's empowerment and social cohesion for improved resilience, food security and nutrition. The approach is increasingly being used in protracted crises, with some 1,000 new Dimitra clubs created in 2018 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and the Niger to promote peace and tackle gender-based violence.

43. The impact of climate change can undermine a culture of peace by affecting safety and livelihoods and triggering conflict and displacement. For example, in their contributions to the Paris Agreement, more than 40 countries connected security and climate change, including through large-scale migrations, security challenges and conflict over scarce resources. The national adaptation plans under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are a guide for Governments for analysing climate risks, identifying and implementing adaptation actions and integrating adaptation into national planning. By March 2018, more than 80 countries had launched their national adaptation plans and more than 35 countries had requested support from the Green Climate Fund. The United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability has been promoting a biocultural diversity approach to advance the more integrated and sustainable use of biological and cultural resources. Since 2016, it has been working to implement the Ishikawa Declaration on Biocultural Diversity.

Involving faith-based actors in environmental protection

Faith-based actors are increasingly important partners in environmental protection. To strengthen its work on the environmental dimensions of peace and conflict, the United Nations Environment Programme created a new Nairobi-based unit on environmental security. This unit will lead the Programme's work on harnessing environmental cooperation for peacebuilding and sustaining peace through, inter alia, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, as well as technical support to countries experiencing conflict and fragility associated with environmental degradation and climate change. During the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, in December 2017, representatives of 10 faiths from 40 organizations were brought together to discuss environmental priorities and agree upon new areas of collaboration.

VII. Conclusions

44. During the reporting period, the sharper focus on preventing and sustaining peace resonated throughout actions across the United Nations system. The report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43) was firmly anchored in the shared responsibility of all stakeholders and targeted greater coherence across the three pillars of the United Nations. It has propelled a critically important framework for peacebuilding and sustaining peace, underpinned by commonly shared values for fostering social cohesion.

45. The reconfiguring of peacebuilding from a post-conflict context to one of preventive diplomacy has meant that cross-pillar engagement has become paramount. The focus on prevention has also opened the way for a wider range of actors, such as women and young people, to contribute to peacebuilding processes. Shifting the focus from response to prevention and identifying the root causes of conflict has similarly enabled more interdisciplinary and fine-grained approaches. The new thrust in peacebuilding efforts has opened up greater space for intercultural and interreligious dialogue and carved a more central and critical role for its contribution to the peacebuilding agenda.

46. Within this context, the definition of peace has broadened to encapsulate more than the absence of war or violent conflict, and approaches to peacebuilding are no longer restricted to situations where conflict is manifest or proximate. Actions have diversified and are characterized by a broad, people-centred transformative process supported by "soft power" approaches. This emphasis has driven a more comprehensive approach to not only addressing conflict but also anticipating and preventing its resurgence.

47. The multifaceted roles of young people and women in peacebuilding efforts were explored in more detail in the reporting period. While young people and women were at times prioritized in programming, United Nations entities experienced difficulties in tapping into the potential of young people and women to enable their full participation in conflict prevention and resolution.

48. Human rights remained a constant thread in activities across the United Nations system. The renewed emphasis on human rights in intercultural dialogue and a culture of peace has meant that a broader range of United Nations entities are exploring innovative entry points for programming, for example, how to engage creatively with faith-based actors.

49. Despite significant efforts, notable challenges remain. The reporting period witnessed a continued surge of attacks around the world on culture and fundamental freedoms, ranging from sites of cultural and religious significance to journalists. The issue of impunity also emerged as a key issue at the global level, and the steps taken to end impunity for attacks on cultural heritage and journalists have paved a promising path for the future. Similarly, greater public awareness of the ethical and responsible use of intercultural tools, such as new media, has provoked a stronger global interest in standing up against issues such as hate speech.

50. Building upon the increased cross-pillar engagement, multiple initiatives have increasingly been pursued, together with a broader basis for partnerships. Similarly, there is greater awareness of the value of dialogue in the pursuit of broader development goals, for example, as a tool for environmental development. Participation in intercultural and interreligious dialogue activities was reflected in the actions of several United Nations entities, sometimes extending beyond their traditional mandates. Concurrently, the reporting period brought to the fore some limitations in inter-agency cooperation, which could be strengthened to advance more coherent and integrated action. There is a clear need to acquire a better understanding of intercultural dialogue. Data collection and greater investment are needed to make intercultural dialogue and a culture of peace more operationally relevant. The continued participation of a broad range of stakeholders can strengthen the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue.